

Waterfowl Strategic Plan

Summary of DNR Public Input Session

March, 2005 Waterfowl Hunters Conference

The Department of Natural Resources conducted a public input session as part of the Waterfowl Strategic Plan process during the Waterfowl Hunters Conference organized by several waterfowl conservation groups. This conference which had speakers on a number of waterfowl topics drew interest from about 170 waterfowl hunters from around state and served as a good venue to begin the planning process. The following is a summary of the input received during this session.

The public input session lasted for about 1 hour and 5 stations on major topic areas were available for attendees to participate in. The topic areas were Regulations, Recruitment and Retention of Hunters, Public and Private Land Management, Hunter Opportunity and Experience and Funding and Licenses. During the public input session, participants were able to move between 5 stations and participate in discussions, offer input on flip charts or complete written comment sheets. The comment sheet and flip chart summaries are provided below. We have organized the summary by the topic areas and the major issues that became apparent based on the comments.

1) Regulations

A total of 33 people submitted written comment sheets on Regulations.

Spinning Wing Decoy and Similar Devices

Comment Sheets- 26/33 commented on this issue

- Ban them – 16 (4 of these folks currently use them)
- No Ban – 7
- Study More – 1
- Ban entire flyway – 2

Flip Charts – 1 comment calling for regulation of SWD's

Seasons

Comment Sheets- 21/33 commented on this issue

60 Days or Longer 7
Shorter 0

Later Season 8
Earlier Season 8

Same as now 5

Flip Charts – 2 comments one for later season and one for same as now.

Zones

Comment Sheets- 15/33 commented on this issue

4 zones – North, South Miss River, Lake Mich	1
More zones	1
3 zones with Miss River	3
2 zones North and South	6
1 zone with 2 splits	2
1 zone statewide – same opener statewide	3
Move the northern zone line south –	4
Allow hunters to only hunt 1 zone	3

Those folks that were advocating for 1 statewide zone in some fashion appeared to be northern zone residents that wanted to stop the influx of southern zone hunters into the northern zone on opening day. This is a big concern for northern zone hunters that hunt near the zone line.

Flip Charts – Allow hunters to only hunt 1 zone – 2 comments, 1 comment for more zones, 1 comment for 1 zone with 2 splits and one comment to move the north zone line further south.

Splits

Comment Sheets- 16/33 commented on this issue

Yes- Splits - Did not say which zone	8
No – Splits - Splits Did not say which zone	1
Need 2 splits	1
Longer Splits	4
South zone split Yes	1
North zone split No	2

Flip chart

Later in the deer Zone T season
Different splits for different season lengths
2 splits

Bag Limits

Comment Sheets- 15/33 commented on this issue

Keep the same	5	
Reduce	7	(Some suggested daily bag of 4)
Increase for Woodies	1	

1 comment suggested a season bag in addition to a daily bag
3 comments suggested increasing the possession limit

Some folks were not sure it would help increase duck populations to reduce bag limits or not. If small changes in the bag were shown to have an impact most folks would prefer more days to hunt rather than a higher daily bag. Most folks said they don't shoot 6 ducks/day so it is not a big issue either way.

Flip charts

1 comment to keep 1 hen mallard bag limit in WI.

Other items that showed up more than once

2 comments against the Youth Hunt
4 comments to ban permanent blinds

Shooting Hours – 3 suggestions
 Opening day sunrise or 8 am
 End shooting hours at 1 pm to rest birds
 Sunup to begin shooting hours

2) Recruitment and Retention of Hunters

A total of 13 people submitted written comment sheets on Recruitment and Retention of Hunters.

Youth Hunt

Comment Sheets- 10/13 commented on this issue

Stop youth hunt	2
Keep youth hunt	4
Keep but just 1 day	1
Keep but just 1 year/youth	2

Do more organized youth hunt events

Increase overall hunter numbers

Comment Sheets- 5/13 commented on this issue

Yes –	3
No -	2
Maintain -	1

Who should do the recruitment of new waterfowl hunters

Comment Sheets- 5/13 commented on this issue

WI DNR	0
Conservation Groups	2
Individual hunters	4

Decrease hunting age

Yes	0
No	2
No restriction	2

Other comments

Two folks thought that kids are simply too urban or electronic to care about hunting. A couple of others seemed to imply focusing on recruiting adults that recently left duck hunting or hunt other species would be best. Some thought more money should be generated for waterfowl hunting clinics or other recruitment activities.

Flip charts

Remove or reduce age restriction for hunting	– 4 comments
More programs for recruitment	- 4 comments

Other comments seemed to support other forms of attention to waterfowl hunting such as reaching adults and TV programming.

3) Public and Private Land Management

A total of 25 people submitted written comment sheets on Land Management.

Public Waterfowl Habitat Management

Comment Sheets- 15/25 commented on this issue

Doing good but don't reduce effort	3
Do more habitat work – general	3
More water mngt	3
More burning	1
Plant crops	1
Don't plant crops	1
Mentioned focus on fall migration habitat	5
Mentioned focus on spring production	2
More funding needed for public land habitat management – 4	
Hire private contractors to do the work	
Need more education of hunters on habitat – 2	
1 comment for more beavers, 1 comment for fewer beavers	

Flip Charts

More burning	2
More brush control mechanical/chemical	2
Need more watermanagement	3
Need public education on habitat mngt.	2
Volunteer projects (nest structures, habitat)	2

Land for waterfowl habitat

Comment Sheets- 10/25 commented on this issue

More public land needed	2
Better access to private land needed	2
Private land needs Tax incentives	3

Spend public \$ on private land

Yes	6
No	1
Public higher priority	1

Flip charts

Streamline regulations so private owners can manage wetlands - 2

Refuge Areas

Comment Sheets- 8/25 commented on this issue

More – 6

Less - 0

One suggested Rest hours, One suggested Rest Days and make the refuges more restrictive – no entry for any reason

Predator Control

Comment Sheets- 7/25 commented on this issue

Yes 6

No 1

2 comments favoring predator control mentioned that eagles are the problem.

1 recognized that there is no money for this kind of increased work

1 suggested a bounty on predators

1 suggested we remove artificial roost sites for avian predators

4) Hunter Opportunity and Experience

A total of 20 people submitted written comment sheets on Hunter Opportunity and Experience.

Negative Experience Cause

Comment Sheets- 18/20 commented on this issue

Too many hunters, intense pressure	12
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Poor ethics of others	8
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Conflict with other users	1
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Low harvest of ducks	2
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Most important factors

Comment Sheets- 13/20 commented on this issue

Quality (Away from others, setting)	9
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# of Days available to hunt	8
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Number of waterfowl seen	4
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Ducks/geese harvested	1
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Flip Charts – 1 comment on # days to hunt more important than larger bag limit.

Managed Hunts

Comment Sheets- 9/20 commented on this issue

In Some form

Yes 7
No 2

Methods- Restrict # hunters – 4, Limit access 2, limit # days/week 2.

Flip charts

Managed Hunts - 2 favor, 1 for testing the idea and one for assigned pit blinds on public land

Opportunity

All 1 comment

Want more open water hunting
Need better access to private land
Buy more public land
We have enough public land
DNR needs to post public lands better.

Other comments

A few comments to give a flavor of the overall input.

“I prefer the number of days to hunt over the number harvested but I would like to shoot more than 1 duck in 15 hunting trips.”

“To me a quality hunt far outweighs a high bag of birds”

“I would rather shoot nothing, than limit out in a crowd.”

5 comments in favor of banning permanent blinds on public land/water.

Flip charts

1 against youth hunt, 1 in favor of youth hunt
1 for more open water hunting, 1 against more open water hunting

5) Funding and Licenses

A total of 17 people submitted written comment sheets on Funding and Licenses.

Need to increase DNR license fees

Comment Sheets- 12/17 commented on this issue

Yes	7
Yes if dollars not diverted	1

Funding not enough for waterfowl management - 4

Flip charts

5 comments favoring increases

Willing to pay more for a managed hunt

Comment Sheets- 9/17 commented on this issue

Yes	4
No	5

Priority Use of Duck Stamp Funds

Comment Sheets- 9/17 commented on this issue

Habitat	1
New Habitat	3
Maintenance of Habitat	2
Projects with many partners	1
Priority in WI not Canada	2
Research	1

On these sheets and from other topics people sometime suggested different uses for duck stamp funds such as promoting duck hunting, educating duck hunters etc.

Other Comments

Two comments urged simplification of license/stamp fees.

Flip charts

Need alternative funding sources for waterfowl – 16 comments related to this.

Need better communication with hunters on how and where funding is spent – 7 comments related to this.

3 people supported simplifying licenses/stamps fees while several others proposed new scenarios which would make fee structure more complex.

